

Influenza Sweeps Through Area Like Tidal Wave, Duration Short

An epidemic of influenza is occurring in parts of Los Angeles County, and last week one local airplane plant reported that an average of 12 employees a day were being sent home because of illness diagnosed as influenza. If it is of any consolation to those who have it or will get it, the disease tends to last only three or four days. The common symptoms are fever, aching muscles, headache, and malaise as a rule accompanied by a sore throat. Usually, the only after effect is a weakness which is perhaps more accurately described as a "dragged out" feeling that may last two or more weeks.

Official summaries published by the U.S. Public Health Service show that the outbreak of influenza is nationwide, and that it is caused by the virus known as Type A. This type is generally the cause of the disease in its epidemic form, which incidentally, can be severe in its attack. There are two other common types, both milder in nature.

Most epidemics of influenza sweep from continent to continent much as a tidal wave, and for that reason their progress during recent years has been charted throughout the world by workers for the World Health Organization Influenza Study Program.

The present epidemic apparently got under way in 1954, when it was reported first in Australia, then in South Africa. Last year, cases were recorded in the British Isles, the United States, and Canada, and this year the United States is apparently feeling its full effect.

Cases High

It is impossible to accurately gauge the extent of the outbreak in this area due to the fact that influenza is not a reportable disease. However, the total number of cases probably represents a sizable figure.

As a matter of fact, the present flare-up was predicted last winter by Dorland J. Davis of the National Microbiological Institute. His prediction was based partly on the fact that the di-

sease occurs in epidemic form periodically, usually every two or three years, and the last outbreak in this country was during 1953.

Vaccination Possible

Vaccination against influenza is possible, and has been tried with considerable success in small groups and localities. The main disadvantage is the short-term effect of such vaccines. Furthermore, the timing of the immunization as well as the incorporation of the correct virus strains is important. From a production standpoint it would probably be impossible to produce enough available vaccine for any mass program of prevention.

Unfortunately, no drug has yet been found that is effective against influenza. Indeed, what might be termed prophylactic chemotherapy to control secondary infection is felt by many doctors to best be reserved for patients with existing lung involvement, or for the old or debilitated.

On the other hand, if influenza

seems to be complicated in any way, either by a bronchial involvement or possible pneumonia, a doctor's services are particularly important, for energetic treatment with antibiotics is called for in such cases.

Since prevention is not practicable for the average person, and drugs are ineffective, all one can do is hope to be missed by this year's epidemic. But once influenza starts in a patient, the best existing treatment is a warm, comfortable stay in bed and a dermation to be as comfortable as possible under the circumstances.

Russell Assigned to Air Base in Germany

Thomas K. Russell has been assigned to Hahn Air Base, Germany, home of the 50th Fighter Bomber Wing, commanded by Col. Fred J. Asant. Airman Second Class Russell is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Marshall who reside at 1569 W. 220th St.

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